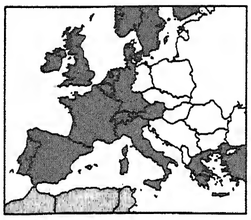


Eastern Europe

REGIONAL BRIEF

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs

October 1989

"The revolutionary changes in that part of Europe still behind a rusting Iron Curtain are changes above all in the minds of men, in their vision of the future. People want freedom: freedom of the mind; freedom in the home; freedom in the workplace; and free governments. And these freedoms will heal the wounds inflicted by stagnation and tyranny."

Secretary Baker
March 6, 1989

A New Chapter

People of Eastern Europe Seeking Political, Economic Changes

Since World War II, Europe has been divided by opposing visions of what its future should hold. The democracies of Western Europe have blossomed, enjoying economic vitality as well as cultural and political diversity. At the same time, the countries of Eastern Europe have stagnated, plagued by a bankrupt ideology, stifled by repressive regimes, and saddled with economies unable to supply even the most basic goods.

For almost half a century, the suppression of freedom in Eastern Europe has isolated its countries and its people. In 1946, the great British statesman Winston Churchill spoke of an Iron Curtain separating Eastern and Western Europe. Four times (1953, 1956, 1968, and 1980-81) the people of Eastern Europe tried to part the curtain to escape Soviet dominance. Each time, the drapes were drawn shut, closing off their attempts to achieve liberty and independence.

Today, a new chapter of East European history is being written as the people of that region declare their yearning for democracy. As a result, small tears in the Iron Curtain threaten to grow in this once impregnable barrier. Against a backdrop of improved Soviet-American relations and internal changes in the U.S.S.R., the countries of Eastern Europe have fresh opportunities for change.

In some countries, the seeds of transformation have been sown. But formidable economic problems are among the many obstacles that remain. Fundamental reforms will be needed to keep pace with rising aspirations and cope with growing social unrest. In addition, leadership changes are expected as aging rulers leave the scene. Finally, nationality and ethnic issues will continue to inflame internal and regional passions.

Political Overview

Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Hungary, Poland, and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) are gradually weaning themselves from Soviet hegemony and forging their destinies. To varying degrees, they have initiated economic and political change, some inspired by developments in the Soviet Union, that could transform the complexion of Europe.

As the people of Eastern Europe seek control over their lives, they are rejecting the constraints imposed by decades of totalitarian communist rule and are moving toward democratization. At the same time, their leaders have begun to realize that change is necessary to remove barriers that impede progress and modernization.

Long before the recent introduction of *perestroika* (economic restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) in the Soviet Union, several East European countries attempted to change. All of these attempts, however, were suppressed. Hungarian leader Imre Nagy led an ill-fated Hungarian uprising in 1956. In Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubcek saw his reform efforts crushed by Soviet tanks in 1968. Martial law curbed the Solidarity movement in Poland in 1981. Today, in a remarkable turnaround, several East European countries have initiated ambitious reform movements, and the Soviets seem to be encouraging the countries to pursue independent programs.

The winds of change in Eastern Europe also have caused growing political division within the Warsaw Pact. Countries in the region such as Poland and Hungary, as well as the Baltic states, have been quick to associate themselves with *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Others, notably Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Romania, have, to varying degrees, disassociated themselves from Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policies and resisted major reform.

Economic Developments

Major economic restructuring, such as decentralization and the introduction of market forces, is underway in Hungary and Poland. Less dramatic changes (e.g., allowing companies and managers more power to make decisions) are taking place in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. Communist leaders, conscious of the success enjoyed by the Western countries, are coming face to

Eastern Europe

Basic Indicators--East European Countries, 1988

	Population[1] (million)	GNP ($ billion)	Per Capita GNP ($)	External Debt[2] ($ billion)
Bulgaria	9.0	67.6	7,540	6.1
Czechoslovakia	15.7	158.2	10,130	2.5
East Germany	16.6	207.2	12,500	20.4
Hungary	10.6	91.8	8,670	17.7
Poland	38.2	276.3	7,280	38.9[3]
Romania	23.2	151.3	6,750	4.9

[1] July 1989
[2] 1987
[3] 1988

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook 1989.

face with their region's economic stagnation.

During the 1980s, the centralized economies of Eastern Europe generally have suffered from anemic economies, shortages of foreign exchange, mounting debt burdens, rising inflation, and little or no technological progress. The standard of living actually has fallen in some countries. Health care has declined, and life expectancy rates in some countries have dropped.

Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania belong to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), which the Soviet Union dominates. Trade among CMEA countries is in the transferable ruble, a currency unavailable for use outside the council. Most East European trade is within CMEA, particularly with the Soviet Union, which supplies most raw materials. Over time, these countries have fallen far behind the West and the newly industrializing countries in the Far East.

Some East European leaders have begun to recognize that they need investment and technology from Western countries to reverse the decline. The CMEA and individual countries are increasing economic contacts with the European Community. U.S. trade with the region is small, less than 5% of total East European commerce. This can increase if reform results in greater economic dynamism and growth in Eastern Europe.

President Bush and Secretary Baker have declared U.S. support for self-determination in Eastern Europe, which includes the elimination of barriers to the movement of people. The President and the Secretary (with Hungarian Premier Miklos Nemeth last July) display plaques with an inscription and a piece of barbed wire removed from the Hungarian-Austrian border in June 1989. (White House photo)

U.S. Policy

The long-term goal of U.S. policy in Eastern Europe is to encourage the region's economic and political integration into the world, ending the artificial division of the continent imposed by the Soviet Union after World War II. This division is at the root of U.S. security concerns in Europe.

The United States pursues a policy of "differentiation," which recognizes the diversity of the region and the distinctive character of each country. Although common concerns—human rights foremost among them—link U.S. policy toward all countries, bilateral relations are conditioned by individual circumstances.

U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe has evolved significantly since the end of World War II. During the Eisenhower Administration, the United States spoke of the liberation of Eastern Europe. After the tragic Hungarian revolution of 1956, the focus shifted to weaning the countries from Soviet domination by fostering more cooperative relationships. The policy of "differentiation," developed largely during the Carter and Reagan Administrations, gave preference to countries that showed greater independence from the Soviet Union and progress in their internal practices and international posture.

Under the Bush Administration, the policy of differentiation continues, based not on each country's relationship with the Soviet Union but on its internal movement toward political and economic liberalization. In a major address at Hamtramck, Michigan, on April 17, 1989, President Bush, responding to the signing of the historic Roundtable Accords in Poland (see Current Policy No. 1166), said that the United States would continue to deal with East European governments on an individual basis to promote human rights, political and economic reform, greater autonomy in foreign policy, and overall European security. He also asserted that the United States would actively support political and economic liberalization in the region.

Emphasizing that the United States "has never accepted the legitimacy of Europe's division," the President welcomed the economic and political reforms taking place in Eastern Europe as important steps in the direction of greater integration of the region into the world. He also underscored America's enduring commitment to the people of Eastern Europe and their striving for democracy and self-determination.

At Mainz, West Germany, on May 31, 1989, President Bush expanded on his policy by saying the United States would continue to do all it could "to help open the closed societies of the East" (see Current Policy No. 1179). Declaring that the United States seeks self-determination for all of Eastern Europe, the President said that the United States wants to promote free elections and political pluralism in the region. He enlisted Western support for the burgeoning political parties in the East to advance freedom and democracy, which will "part the Iron Curtain."

The highlight of the President's policy initiative was his historic trip to Poland and Hungary in July 1989, the first presidential trip to Hungary and the first to Poland since that of President Carter in 1977. In both countries, Mr. Bush enumerated a series of proposals to support dramatic reform movements in Poland and Hungary and to encourage other countries in the region to follow their lead.

The United States envisions a prosperous and peaceful Eastern Europe, free from the barriers to the movement of people, goods, and ideas, where people can choose their system of government in regular, democratic elections. U.S. foreign policy is directed toward realizing that vision.

Poland

Politics

The United States envisions a prosperous and peaceful Eastern Europe, with free elections, no barriers to the movement of people, goods, or ideas, and other democratic changes. President Bush has underscored that support by meeting with Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and other champions of reform in the region.

(White House photo)

After Poland's occupation by the Soviet army in 1945, a Polish government was established under communist rule and staged elections took place. In 1952, a Soviet-style constitution was adopted.

In 1956, Soviet troops brutally suppressed a strike by Polish workers protesting food shortages and the lack of freedom. In the aftermath, Wladyslaw Gomulka became Secretary General of the Polish Communist Party. Though initially a reformer, Gomulka eventually established a rigid, totalitarian government. He was replaced in 1970 by Edward Gierek in the aftermath of strikes suppressed by military force.

During the heyday of detente, foreign investment rose in Poland. But by the late 1970s, the economic situation had deteriorated as Poland's debt grew and growth declined. The government announcement of meat price increases caused strikes to erupt at the Gdansk shipyards in August 1980, heralding the birth of the Solidarity trade union. In accords signed with government representatives, Solidarity won several concessions from the government, including the right to form independent trade unions and the right to strike.

The turmoil ended Gierek's reign and signaled the advent of Stanislaw Kania, who in turn was replaced by then-Defense Minister General Wojciech Jaruzelski. To deter continuing demands for far-reaching reforms in Poland's economic and political system, Jaruzelski, acting apparently under Soviet pressure, imposed martial law on December 13, 1981. Hundreds of Solidarity activists were jailed, and union leader Lech Walesa was placed under house arrest. In the face of international pressure, martial law was eventually lifted. However, Solidarity was outlawed.

After almost 6 years of social and economic impasse, widespread strikes in May and August 1988 forced the Polish Government to recognize a need for national reconciliation. Talks between Solidarity and the government were initiated, culminating in the historic Roundtable Accords signed on April 5, 1989. The accords have ushered in unprecedented political reform. Under the agreement, parliamentary elections in June 1989, the freest and fairest elections in more than 40 years, took place and transformed Poland's political landscape. Solidarity candidates scored a decisive victory in balloting to choose a new Senate, winning 99 of 100 seats. Solidarity achieved 38% of the seats in the lower house.

The government's defeat opened the prospect of power-sharing between the Communist Party and the opposition in the new National Assembly. Jaruzelski was elected by the National Assembly to assume a 6-year term of office as president, but only with the acquiescence of the parliamentary opposition. To form the new government, Jaruzelski selected Solidarity leader Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who has proposed extensive political and economic reform.

Economics

Although Poland is the most populous country in Eastern Europe, it appears near the bottom in per capita income. Despite economic growth averaging more than 4% annually since 1983, real national income in 1988 was still below the 1978 level. Poland has rich mineral resources, notably coal and copper, but mineral and industrial development has caused major environmental problems, including air and water pollution. Private farms account for 75% of the country's agricultural production. Consumer prices increased 58% in 1988 and are rising at an annual rate above 100%. Shortages of goods are prevalent because demand for consumer items continues to outstrip supply, and the lack of foreign exchange precludes sufficient imports. The shortages, in turn, fuel consumer and worker discontent.

Since 1982, the Polish authorities have attempted, with limited success, to institute economic reforms. Their objectives have been to reduce bureaucratic control, encourage initiative within the public and private sectors, and increase reliance on free market mechanisms. Nevertheless, little progress has been made toward more efficient use of labor, capital, and energy.

Poland's external debt approaches $40 billion; the U.S. share is about $2.2 billion. The country has been unable to meet its debt service obligations despite four rescheduling agreements since 1981. Poland now is requesting additional rescheduling under the auspices of the Paris Club (official bilateral and multilateral creditors) and is trying to negotiate a standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund. It also is seeking foreign capital.

The United States wants to establish closer economic ties with Poland. U.S.-Polish trade in 1987 was only 2% of Poland's total. In his July 1989 speech to the Polish Parliament, President Bush announced six measures to assist the country's ongoing political and economic change:

• Concerted international efforts: Action by the U.S., West European, and Japanese

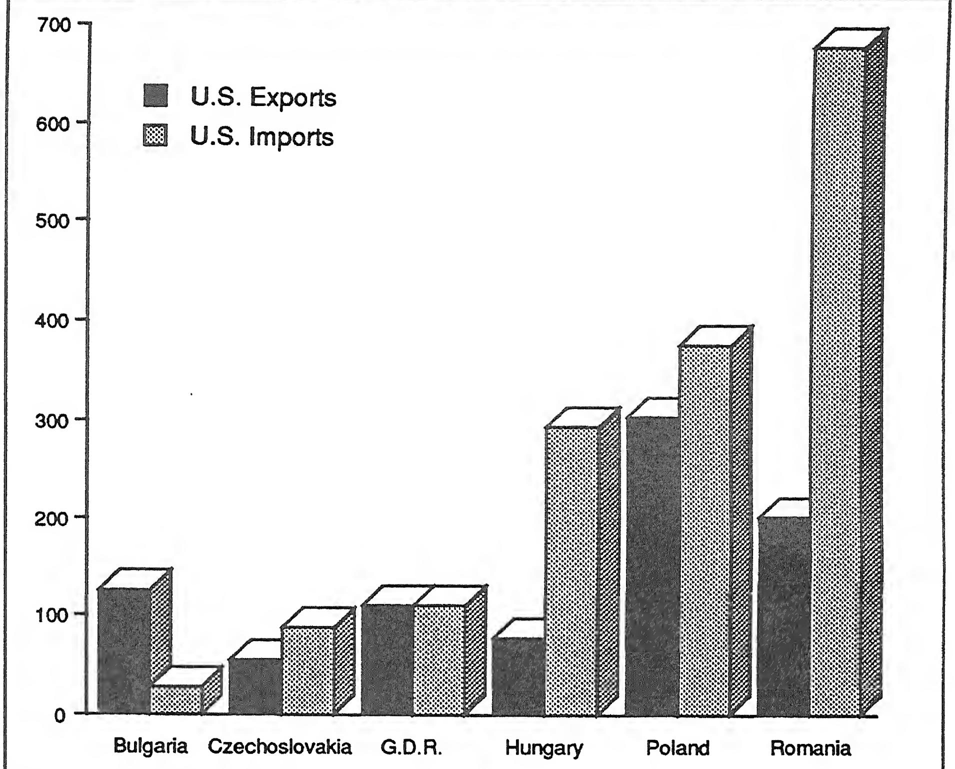
Governments to support Polish economic and political reform (a subject discussed at the recent economic summit in Paris);

- Polish-American enterprise fund: A proposed fund, with a U.S. grant of $100 million, to support private entrepreneurs in Poland;
- World Bank loans: U.S. support of the World Bank to move ahead with two project loans totaling $325 million;
- Debt rescheduling: Support of an early debt rescheduling for Poland in the Paris Club, allowing Poland to postpone payment of about $5 billion this year;
- Environmental initiative: A request that Congress provide $15 million for a cooperative venture to help fight air and water pollution; and
- Cultural center: Expansion of U.S. exchange programs with Poland, including the opening of a cultural center in Warsaw.

In addition, the President has requested that Congress:

- Provide Poland an additional $100 million in economic assistance;
- Provide Poland access to the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which offers selective tariff relief to certain countries; and
- Authorize the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) to operate in Poland.

U.S. Trade With Eastern Europe, 1988 ($ million)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

Hungary

Politics

After 2 years of parliamentary government from 1945 to 1947, Hungary's communist minority, aided by the Soviet Union, seized power and established a dictatorship. First Secretary Matyas Rakosi eliminated democratic opposition and oversaw the adoption of a communist-style constitution in August 1949. The country was governed as a police state subservient to Moscow.

Fierce opposition to the communist regime erupted in 1956. The government, led by Premier Imre Nagy, was swept along by a nationalistic exuberance identified with basic popular demands. After Nagy proclaimed Hungary's intentions to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and hold free multiparty elections, Soviet troops invaded, crushing the nationalist uprising. Nagy was tried and eventually executed.

On June 16, 1989, the anniversary of his execution in 1958, Nagy's remains were removed from an unmarked grave. In a huge public ceremony, he was reburied with honors.

Since the early 1960s, Hungary has experimented with economic reform, achieving only limited success. The Hungarian people were given an increasing measure of personal freedom. The government tolerated more freedom of expression and encouraged small-scale private initiative. Contacts with the West were promoted, and the profit motive introduced in state-controlled companies. Rigidity in the economic system and the continued role of state monopolies and inefficient state industries hampered economic reform. Nevertheless, economic and political reforms were initiated and over time have increasingly influenced the Hungarian system.

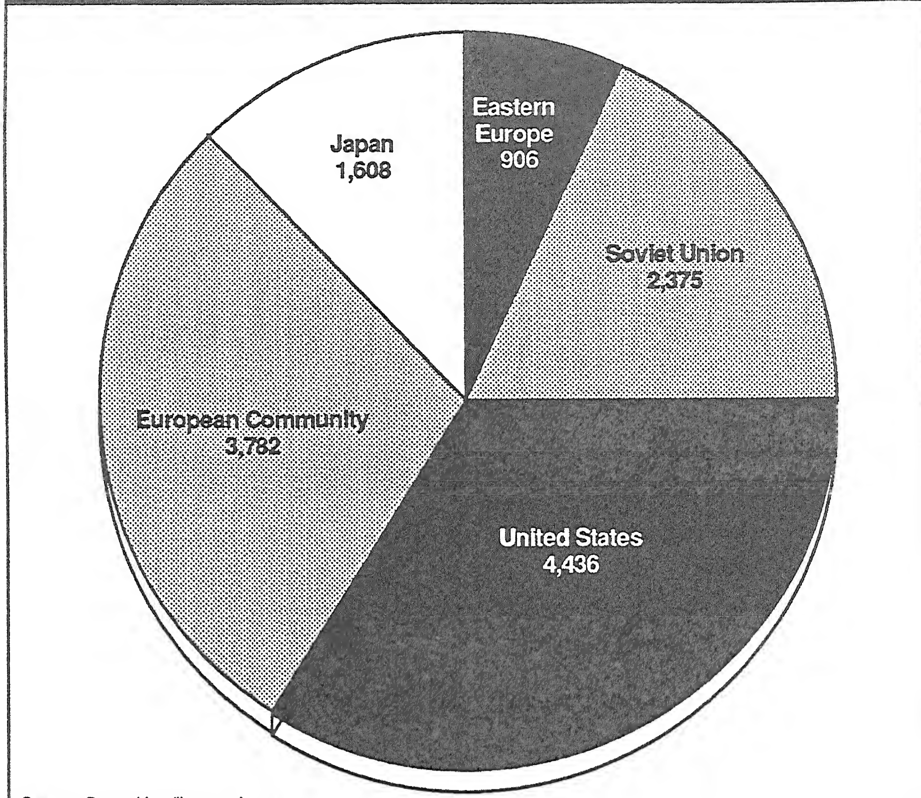
Today, Hungary seems to be moving closer to a pluralistic, Western-style political system. Early in 1989, the Hungarian parliament authorized the formation of independent political parties that will be eligible to compete in multiparty elections this fall and parliamentary elections next year. Nagy's reputation has been restored, and the country has begun a series of reforms that may portend a brighter future for the Hungarian people.

Economics

Hungary's economy is one of the more advanced in the region. Although Hungarian leaders have encouraged economic decentralization and the introduction of market forces, subsidies and opposition to reform by bureaucratic forces have blunted reforms. Economic growth has been low in the 1980s with the exception of the agricultural sector, which generally has been self-sufficient and an important source of export earnings from meat, grains, and fruits and vegetables.

Hungary is highly dependent on foreign trade, about 50% of which is with other Warsaw Pact countries. Although U.S. trade with Hungary is modest, U.S. exports to Hungary have grown some since 1985. Hungary's trade with the European Community is expected to increase as a result of a September 1988 commercial and economic agreement. Hungary is trying to attract

Gross National Product, 1987 ($ billions)



Source: Central Intelligence Agency

Western capital to modernize production facilities and develop its technology. It has been able to service its foreign debt without rescheduling, despite being the largest per capita debtor in Eastern Europe, but has a low level of foreign exchange reserves. The government is instituting domestic austerity to permit more resources for exports.

The United States supports efforts by the Hungarian leadership to move toward a more democratic society and a more market-oriented economy. During his July 1989 trip to Hungary, President Bush announced a number of measures, including:

- Hungarian-American enterprise fund: A proposed fund, with a U.S. grant of $25 million over 3 years, to support private entrepreneurs in Hungary;
- Environmental center: A request to Congress for $5 million to establish a regional environmental center in Budapest that will address the region's ecological problems;
- Peace Corps: Establishment of a Peace Corps program, the first in Eastern Europe, to help Hungarian instructors teach English; and
- Cultural center: Establishment of a U.S. cultural center in Budapest.

After Hungary passes draft emigration legislation bringing Hungarian law into conformity with its practice, President Bush has said that he will notify Congress that Hungary is entitled to continuous most-favored-nation trade status. He has authorized selective tariff relief for Hungary under the GSP and asked Congress to authorize OPIC operations there.

Czechoslovakia

Politics

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racy guaranteeing civil liberties, insulating the government from the Communist Party, and restoring multiparty free elections.

The contemplated reforms aroused opposition among other Warsaw Pact countries, which, led by the Soviet Union, invaded and occupied Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Under Soviet pressure, Dubcek was deposed, and the new government under Gustav Husak repudiated democratic reforms and returned Czechoslovakia to the communist fold.

In 1988, Husak was elevated to the largely ceremonial presidency, and Milos Jakes took over as Party General Secretary. The change has brought few changes in the political situation. Fearing a repetition of the events of 1968, the government has resisted pressure from Moscow to institute reforms and has cracked down on dissidents and reform-minded demonstrators.

Economics

Czechoslovakia has a highly developed, industrialized economy. The standard of living is fairly high, and unemployment is virtually nonexistent. The engineering and machine-building sectors remain the backbone of the Czechoslovak economy, although consumers and government officials criticize product quality. Czechoslovakia basically is self-sufficient in agriculture. The government borrows cautiously in international financial markets to modernize the country's industry.

Under Jakes, Czechoslovakia has taken some steps toward economic reform. Individual enterprises have received greater autonomy and are required to finance operations without government subsidies. Enterprises are encouraged to engage in foreign trade and can retain a share of hard currency earnings for their use. Nevertheless, the economy remains burdened by overcentralization and sectoral imbalances, and the government is reluctant to stray significantly from a centrally planned economy.

At least three-quarters of Czechoslovakia's foreign trade is with CMEA countries. The Soviet Union supplies Czechoslovakia with almost all of its oil, natural gas, iron ore, and other raw materials. The low quality and uncompetitive prices of

Czechoslovakia's exports contribute to a low level of trade with Western countries. In 1987, U.S. trade accounted for only 1% of Czechoslovakia's trade with noncommunist countries. Czechoslovakia has failed to qualify for most-favored-nation tariff status from the United States, a contentious issue between the two countries.

German Democratic Republic

Politics

After World War II, Germany was divided among the victorious Allies with Soviet troops occupying the eastern part. Disagreement between the Western allies and the Soviet Union over German unification led to the creation of two countries in 1949: the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). Since then, East Germany's policies have followed the Soviet line.

For more than 20 years, East Germany remained isolated from the noncommunist world and eschewed domestic political and economic reform. In the early 1970s, it began to emerge diplomatically as a result of detente. Normalization of relations between the two Germanies and the West began in 1972. Progress on the international front has not occurred domestically.

Under General Secretary Erich Honecker, the communist regime has pursued a mixed policy of repression and accommodation. While resisting internal reform, East Germany has attempted to manage foreign and domestic pressure by liberalizing restrictions on emigration and travel. Having repudiated *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the government continues to restrict human rights but pursues improved relations with the West. In October 1989, Honecker resigned and was replaced by Egon Krenz.

Economics

East Germany has the most industrialized and developed economy in Eastern Europe, and its population has the highest standard of living among CMEA countries. East German consumers are dissatisfied, however, with inefficient distribution of goods and inflation, comparing themselves to the more affluent West Germans, rather than to their less fortunate neighbors.

East German authorities have been able to resist demands for reform because of greater economic success and good credit ratings with international bankers. The economy remains highly centralized: most East German economic activity is carried out by 126 state-owned sectoral monopolies. East Germany faces labor shortages because of declining population. Women account for an unusually high 49% of the work force.

About 40% of East Germany's trade is with the Soviet Union, while 25% is with other East European countries. Trade with West Germany comprises 50%-60% of East Germany's total with Western countries. East Germany benefits greatly from a special trade relationship with West Germany, which extends to East Germany interest-free credits for the purchase of West German goods.

U.S.-East German trade remains small, about $220 million in 1988. U.S. exports to East Germany have declined through most of the 1980s, although they are beginning to increase. Many U.S. firms approach the East German market through a subsidiary in West Germany.

Bulgaria

Politics

As leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party since 1954, General Secretary Todor Zhivkov has remained in power longer than any East European ruler, the result of his allegiance to the Soviet Union and his skill at managing the party apparatus. Under Zhivkov, Bulgaria is pursuing a limited version of *perestroika* but has engaged in no serious political reform. As a result, a modest level of internal political opposition has developed in a country that heretofore had displayed little evidence of dissension within the party.

The government continues its repression of a small, but growing number of dissidents and has been accused by human rights organizations of attempting to forcibly assimilate about 1 million ethnic Turks living in Bulgaria. Peaceful demonstrations by the Turks in May 1989 led to further repression and the expulsion of several thousand Turks. Many of the more than 300,000 who sought to go to Turkey were forced to leave behind possessions and family members who were unable to obtain permission to emigrate.

Economics

Bulgaria's per capita income is low compared to its neighbors. During the 1980s, growth in Bulgaria's real gross national product increased by little more than 1% a year. Bulgaria's economy is based on heavy manufacturing, but it has a growing computer industry. Agriculture remains an important component; the country is a major tobacco producer. Bulgaria has an ambitious nuclear energy program that supplies more than 40% of total electric energy.

Bulgaria is taking limited steps to move away from a command economy. Major features of the current economic reform process, which began in 1986, include a decentralized managerial decision process, financial incentives to motivate workers, a commercial banking system, and more rational pricing policies. Reform is designed to make the economy more competitive and dynamic, but it is too early to gauge its effectiveness.

Bulgaria trades primarily with other communist countries. It has a shortage of foreign exchange, which makes debt-servicing difficult and limits trade with hard-currency countries. The U.S. share of Bulgaria's imports from Western countries remains small because of its limited ability to sell in the United States.

Romania

Politics

President Nicolae Ceausescu remains in firm control after more than two decades, presiding over a country on the verge of economic ruin. A stringent program of domestic austerity and the prevalence of harsh police state methods have undermined the physical and psychological well-being of the Romanian people. Despite growing public discontent, including flight by Romanians to neighboring countries in search of refuge, Ceausescu has adamantly opposed *perestroika* and *glasnost*. Instead, he has presented himself as the leading exponent of Marxist orthodoxy in the region.

Along with its severe restrictions on speech and association, the government in recent years has put pressure on Hungarian and other ethnic minorities to assimilate. Moreover, government plans for rural "systemization"—in effect, razing rural villages

and forcing their inhabitants into centralized communities—are potentially damaging to the historical and cultural underpinnings of Romanian society.

Economics

A resource-rich country, Romania's per capita income is near the bottom in Eastern Europe. Its development strategy is focused on intensive capital investment in heavy industry, much of which is technically obsolete, as well as large-scale infrastructure projects of questionable economic value. Low agricultural productivity is worsened by almost exclusive reliance on collective farms and resistance to market-based initiatives to encourage private producers.

Romanian leaders have made no effort to introduce meaningful economic reforms. Rather, they have tightened control over the economy, inhibited foreign business activity, and suppressed worker rights. Austerity measures have resulted in a shortage of food and medicine and a scarcity of energy for households and industry. Unrelenting pursuit of export expansion and harsh restrictions on imports have created a trade surplus and enabled the government to pay off most of Romania's foreign debt. The cost has been damage to the economy and the standard of living.

Romania depends increasingly on foreign trade, which is divided almost equally between communist and noncommunist countries. In February 1988, Romania renounced its most-favored-nation trade status on ground that it would no longer be bound by U.S. conditions calling for free emigration policies. Until this status formally was suspended in July 1988, U.S. trade with Romania was substantial, at least in comparison to U.S. commerce with other East European countries. U.S.-Romanian trade during the first half of 1989 fell by more than 50% from the same period in 1988. Romania maintains a 4:1 trade surplus with the United States; almost one-half of trade consists of Romanian exports of petroleum products. ■

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